



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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**NEW ERA IN WETLANDS CONSERVATION BEGINS;**  
**FIRST PROJECTS APPROVED UNDER WETLANDS CONSERVATION ACT**

Nearly 360,000 acres of threatened wetlands and surrounding habitats for wildlife will be acquired, improved, and restored in the first projects approved for funding under the 1989 North American Wetlands Conservation Act.

Scattered throughout North America, the wetlands to be conserved harbor dozens of species of waterfowl, mammals such as deer and moose, and endangered and rare wildlife such as whooping cranes, piping plovers, and bald eagles. Funding for the projects was approved in a landmark action September 18 by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission.

"This marks the beginning of a new approach to international wetlands conservation," said Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan, chairman of the Commission. "These projects are being made possible by a historic partnership among private businesses, conservation groups, and government agencies throughout the continent."

The projects range in scope from a wetland/environmental education program in Mexico to acquisition and restoration of wetlands in key waterfowl habitats of Canada and the United States. Thirty projects out of 168 proposed were selected for

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approval after extensive evaluation by the North American Wetlands Conservation Council, created for that purpose by the 1989 law, and regional teams of reviewers.

"The approval of these projects signals the first major increase in the Federal commitment to support the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and related wetlands programs," said John Turner, director of the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Included are 10 projects in prairie Canada, 10 in eastern Canada, 1 in Mexico, and 9 in the United States. Funding for these projects will include a Federal share of \$14.4 million and over \$27.8 million in partnership contributions from Canada, state governments, and state and national conservation groups. Funding for additional projects will be considered by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission in February 1991.

"Because of the Commission's approval of the Wetlands Conservation Council's recommendations, high-value wetland areas that were in imminent danger of destruction will be saved and wetland enhancement programs with long-term gains will be initiated. We look forward to continuing our work with the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission to further those goals," said Matthew B. Connolly, executive vice president of Ducks Unlimited, Inc., and chairman of the North American Wetlands Conservation Council.

The North American Wetlands Conservation Act was passed by Congress and signed by President Bush in December 1989 out of concern for the loss of wetlands in the United States and elsewhere in North America. Wetlands are essential habitats for hundreds of fish and wildlife species and also help control floods, recharge groundwater, and filter pollutants. More than half of the wetlands that existed in the United States when the Pilgrims landed have been destroyed, and populations of many duck and other wetland-dependent migratory bird species are at historic lows.

The North American Wetlands Conservation Act provides Federal funding to encourage partnerships to protect, enhance, restore, and manage wetlands and other habitats for migratory birds and other North American fish and wildlife. The Act authorizes annual appropriations of up to \$15 million, with an additional sum of \$10 million a year from a special fund for interest on Federal excise taxes on hunting equipment sales. Other funding is provided by fines collected for violations of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and from private contributions.

The Act also established the North American Wetlands Conservation Council, which submits project recommendations to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission for approval. The Council, appointed by Lujan, includes Chairman Matthew B. Connolly, Jr., Ducks Unlimited, Inc.; Peter F. Bontadelli, California Department of Fish and Game; Gary Meyers, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency; Dr. W. Alan Wentz, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks; Dr. John C. Sawhill, The Nature Conservancy; Dr. James A. Timmerman, Jr., South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Department; and William W. Howard Jr., National Wildlife Federation; with Jack Lorenz, Izaak Walton League of America, alternate. The Act provides that John Turner, as Fish and Wildlife Service Director, and Charles H. Collins, as Executive Director, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, are automatically members of the Council. Dr. Robert Streeter, Fish and Wildlife Service, serves as Council Coordinator.

All projects recommended by the Council must be approved by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, composed of Interior Secretary Lujan; Secretary of Agriculture Clayton Yeutter; Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency William Reilly; Congressmen Silvio Conte (Massachusetts) and John Dingell (Michigan); and Senators Thad Cochran (Mississippi) and David Pryor (Arkansas). The Commission also administers the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund, which uses revenues from the sale of the Federal Duck Stamp to acquire wetlands and migratory bird habitats for the National Wildlife Refuge System.

A summary of approved projects follows:

#### Canada

The Eastern Habitat Joint Venture includes projects in Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland. These regions provide critical breeding and migration habitat for waterfowl, especially black ducks, and also habitat for migratory shorebirds.

The Prairie Habitat Joint Venture includes projects in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. These regions provide highly productive breeding areas for all ground-nesting birds.

Funding approved for the Canadian projects is for the acquisition, enhancement, and restoration of critical habitat. The United States Federal portion is \$7.4 million. Total matching dollars from private and state sources in the United States and from Canadian provinces and private sources amount to \$15 million, bringing the total amount raised to over \$22 million.

### Mexico

The Sian Ka'an Biosphere Conservation project located on the Yucatan Peninsula will help the indigenous Mayan population maintain a lifestyle based on sustainable use of the wetlands system through environmental education.

The funding approved is for training of teachers and environmental education. The United States Federal portion is \$23,500 which is matched by an equal amount from private partners, bringing the total to \$47,000.

### United States

The nine projects chosen are in the states of Minnesota, South Carolina, California, Kansas, Louisiana, Ohio, Illinois, and North Dakota. They represent the highest priority wetland areas within the United States for migratory birds and other wetland wildlife.

Act money approved for the nine projects totals nearly \$7 million and has generated \$12.5 million from private and state partners in the United States. The total cost will be \$23 million, including other Federal dollars.